

IN THE CLAIMS

1-21. (Cancelled)

22. (Currently Amended) A gaming machine for simultaneously displaying player tracking information and a game image on the same display, the gaming machine in communication with a host computer over a network, the host computer maintaining a player tracking account with player tracking information associated with a player, the gaming machine comprising:

- a player tracking input device coupled to receive player identification information;
- a communications interface coupled to provide the received player identification information to the host computer;
- a display;
- game electronics configured to provide a game image including game output information;
- a video overlay device coupled between the game electronics and the display to receive the game image and configured to:
 - receive, responsive to the host computer identifying the player based on the player identification information, the player tracking information from the player account,
 - generate a player tracking information image including the player tracking information,
 - determine one or more regions of the game image that are unimportant to game play, wherein the one or more regions are portions of the game image that if overlaid would not interfere with the enjoyment and operation of the game,
 - overlay the player tracking information image on the one or more regions of the game image, thereby creating a combined image, and wherein the player tracking information image appears to be embedded within the game image,
 - provide the combined image to the display, and
 - provide, when the player is not identified, only the game image to the display.

23. (Previously Presented) The gaming machine of claim 22, wherein the player tracking information includes one or more selected from the group consisting of a player name, player ID, point data, progressive data, extra credit data, bonus data, loyalty data, and award data.

24. (Previously Presented) The gaming machine of claim 22, wherein the player tracking information image includes an animated graphic.

25. (Previously Presented) The gaming machine of claim 22, wherein the game image shows a plurality of reels.

26. (Previously Presented) The gaming machine of claim 22, wherein the player tracking input device includes a card reader.

27. (Currently Amended) A gaming machine for simultaneously displaying player tracking information and a game image on the same display, the gaming machine in communication with a host computer over a network, the host computer maintaining a player tracking account with player tracking information associated with a player, the gaming machine comprising:

- a card reader coupled to receive player identification information from a player tracking card;
- a communications interface coupled to provide the received player identification information to the host computer;
- a game video display;
- game electronics programmed to provide a game image including game output information;
- a video overlay device coupled between the game electronics and the game video display to receive the game image and configured to:
 - receive, responsive to the host computer identifying the player based on the player identification information, the player tracking information from the player account via the communications interface,
 - generate a player tracking information image including the player tracking information,
 - determine one or more regions of the game image that are unimportant to game play, wherein the one or more regions are portions of the game image that if overlaid would not interfere with the enjoyment and operation of the game,
 - overlay the player tracking information image on the one or more regions of the game image, thereby creating a combined image, and wherein the player tracking information image appears to be embedded within the game image,
 - provide the combined image to the game video display, and
 - provide, when the player is not identified, only the game image to the game video display.

28. (Previously Presented) The gaming machine of claim 27, wherein the player tracking information includes one or more selected from the group consisting of a player name, player ID, point data, progressive data, extra credit data, bonus data, loyalty data, and award data.

29. (Previously Presented) The gaming machine of claim 27, wherein the player tracking information image includes an animated graphic.

30. (Previously Presented) The gaming machine of claim 27, wherein the game image shows a plurality of reels.

31. (Currently Amended) A method for simultaneously displaying player tracking information and a game image on the same display of a gaming machine in communication with a host computer over a network, the host computer maintaining a player tracking account with player tracking information associated with a player, the method comprising:

- providing, in game electronics coupled to a video overlay device, a game image including game output information;
- receiving, in the video overlay device coupled between the game electronics and the display, the game image;
- receiving player identification information;
- determining whether the host computer identifies the player based on the player identification information;
- when the host computer identifies the player:
 - receiving the player tracking information from the player account,
 - generating a player tracking information image including the player tracking information at the video overlay device,
 - determining at the video overlay device one or more regions of the game image that are unimportant to game play, wherein the one or more regions are portions of the game image that if overlaid would not interfere with the enjoyment and operation of the game,
 - combining, in the video overlay device, the player tracking information image with the game image to define a combined image by overlaying the player tracking information image on the one or more regions of the game image designated as unimportant to game play, and wherein the player tracking information image appears to be embedded within the game image, and
- providing the combined image to the display; and
- when the host computer does not identify the player:
 - providing, from the video overlay device, only the game image to the display.

32. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 31, wherein the player tracking information includes one or more selected from the group consisting of a player name, player ID, point data, progressive data, extra credit data, bonus data, loyalty data, and award data.

33. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 31, wherein the player tracking information image includes an animated graphic.

34. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 31, wherein the game image shows a plurality of reels.